

The Burusho of Hunza

by E. O. LORIMER

101 THE small state of Hunza is the most northerly in British India.
131 It consists for the most part of a close-packed mass of unscaled
133 and unscalable mountain peaks over 20,000 feet, seamed by
197 untrodden rivers of snow and ice; as might be anticipated, it is
mainly uninhabited. Its frontiers march with Afghanistan on the
northwest and with Chinese Turkestan on the north and northeast.
But where the Hunza river has cut its way down from the Pamirs to
join the Gilgit river and ultimately the Indus, there remain, clinging
to the mountain sides, a few sloping, rocky terraces which, if water can
be brought to them, can with diligence be rendered fit for human
habitation. These oases of green amidst the barren desolation of
rock and cliff and mountain peak are the habitat of a sturdy mountain
people, the Burusho, speaking a difficult but extremely interesting
language, of so great antiquity that no affinity between it and any other
known form of human speech has yet been traced by the comparative
philologist.

114 When D.L. was posted as Political Agent, Gilgit (1920-24) he
121 made it one of his leisure tasks to collect material for a scientific study
of Burushaski (the language of the Burusho) the result of which is a
three-volume work*—grammar, texts and vocabulary—of which the
last volume is just issuing from the press. In 1934—ten years after
his retirement—we returned unofficially to Hunza, armed indeed with a
considerable knowledge of the language but with no facility in speaking
it, to live amongst the peasants and make such a study of their customs,
agriculture, economics, etc., as amateur anthropologists might.

181 During our four years in Gilgit we had not failed to discover that
609 the Hunzokuts (dwellers in Hunza) were the most attractive of all the
643 likable mountain peoples of the Gilgit Agency, the most physically
prepossessing, the most intelligent and the most trustworthy. All
classes in Hunza gave us a warm welcome, from the Mir—who has

113 * *The Burushaski Language*, by Lt.-Col. D. L. R. Lorimer, Oslo, 1935 (England: Williams and Norgate) published by the Norwegian Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture.

INTRODUCTION

THE LAND and the PEOPLE.

Burushaski, the main subject of the present work, is spoken in the States of Hunza and Nagir, which give a name to that tangle of snow-crowned mountains, long-drawn glaciers and deep-cut river beds that form the western extremities of the Karakoram and Kailās ranges of the Geographers. In elevation and ruggedness the tract may compare with any other portion of the earth's surface. The ground covered by the twin States is roughly defined by the lines $74^{\circ} 10'$ and $75^{\circ} 40'$ of East longitude and 36° and $37^{\circ} 10'$ of North latitude. Of this area the bulk falls to Hunza. Hunza marches on the North with Afghan and Chinese territory, from which it is divided by an immense mountain barrier traversable only by a few very high passes — the Irshad (16,060 ft.), the Kilik (15,600), the Mintaka (15,430) and the Khunjerāb. 101
131
133

The southern drainage from this range quickly assembles a few miles below Misgār to form the Hunza river, which proceeds southwards through the Herber or Gujhāl valley, or rather gorge. On its way the river receives reinforcement by tributaries from either side — the principal being the Batūra and Pasu glaciers on the West and the Shīmsāl valley on the East. About 15 miles East of Baltit, the capital of Hunza, the river changes to a general westerly course, and level with Baltit it receives on its left bank the waters of the Nagir river which represent the meltings of the

Buluki-yāš kav. "Baluki's-path Cave", where she reared her family. 246.6
Burulo. Name of a gorge up in the mountains above Haidarābād.

103
 551

Burulo from *Balulo*. 270.1, 260.5.

Burubodi. Name of a boy. 270.3.

Burumiflan. Name of the twin-brother of Pangchu (Kisar). 110.20, 144.16 ff.
 Death of 160.21.

Buri Bura. Name of a place, the "Silver Boulder". 234.2.

Buri Kotov. Name of a clan in Galmit. 272.16.

Borondo Bor. The "Ring Nullah", a tributary nullah on the left bank of the Hunza River a few miles above Baltit.

Borog. One of the "Four Clans" of Baltit. 268.1, 270.6, 302.8.

Borogšala. The territory of the Borog Clan.

Burum Mow(ā). The "White Mud-Flood" at Aliābād. 240.7, 15.

Burum Pfu. The "White Div." 2.7 ff.

Burushaski, *Borushaski*, *Borishaski*. The language of the Burusho of Hunza and Nagir. I have been unable to get confirmation in either Hunza or Nagir of the term "Borishaski" used by Biddulph.

Burushaski is spoken in Nagir above Gbulmit. For its distribution in Hunza see Introduction Vol. I, p. XXXIV, where the facts given are mainly derived from the Census material of 1931. I was previously told (in 1924) that Burushaski was also spoken in Khaibar and Sost in Herbar, and Rāwinj in Chuprān.

Borusho, *Burusho*, *Burisho*, ag. *Burushin*. The people in Hunza and Nagir whose first language is Burushaski. They call themselves by this name. It is denied that the Burushaski-speaking people of Hunza and Nagir call themselves, or their language, "Yeshkun", as stated by Conway ("Climbing in the Himalayas", pp. 242-3) Classification of the Burusho as "Yeshkun" by Biddulph (F. H. K. p. 38) is not supported by local practice, as indeed he admits.

101 ●

At the present day the appellation *Yashkun* appears to be used only in differentiating the two main elements of the Shina-speaking population of the Gilgit and neighbouring regions, viz. the *Šin* and the *Yashkun*. See, however, the entries *yāš* and *Yashkurya* in the Vocabulary, from which it would appear that a more general use of the term could be justified.

The word *Borusho* may be compared with the first element of the words *Worogwam*, and *Worishkar* (*Worishkar*), the Khovar terms for Yasin and the Yasin dialect of Burushaski respectively. The Burushaski speakers of Yasin call themselves "Burusho", and their language "Burushaski".

Sarat Chandra Das gives Tibetan "*Bru-tsha*" and "*Bru-sha*" as "the name of a country N. W. of Tibet".

Cp. also Jäschke, "*Bru-ta*", "*Bru-ta*".

Borur Jamhur. A corruption of the Persian name, Buzurjmīhr. 58.2 ff.

Borurjmīhor. 56.16 v. preceding entry.

CHAPTER 30

Who Are the Hunzans?

I HAVE HEARD the people of Hunza referred to as Hunzans, Hunzukuts, Hunzawals and Hunzas. They prefer to be called Hunzukuts. 101 •

However, in my writing I am referring to them as Hunzans. I do this strictly as a matter of simplification. I find it easy to say and easy to remember and I also believe it to be the most phonetical of all the terms given.

The Mir claims that the rulers of Hunza were and are direct descendants of Alexander the Great. I could find no proof to either confirm or refute this statement. But it is generally believed that not only the Mir, but the people of Hunza are descendants of Alexander or his soldiers. 643
173

It has been related by many writers that the Hunzans are not by appearance an Asian people. To that I will subscribe completely. They are definitely, in 144

nature of their homeland.

However, the Mir pointed out to me most clearly and emphatically that intermarriage among members of one tribe is absolutely forbidden. There are four tribes in the Baltit area and they can marry among these four tribes . . . Diramiting, Khorokoch, Borong, Barataling . . . but definitely not among their own tribe.

Lest this sounds like a difficult matter to hold in check, I want to explain that this is easier to control than may be imagined, for the simple reason that all marriages must be sanctioned and performed by the Mir. Therefore he positively knows who is marrying whom.

However, even if this has been the rule for many hundreds of years, the total population of Hunza, even today, stands at something less than 25,000 souls and Lord Curzon in his memoirs states that in 1894, the total population of Hunza was only 6,000. Therefore, among so small a population, it is almost impossible for them to marry very far beyond a family relationship. (In 1934 it was estimated that the population had risen to 15,000.)

Let's put it in another way. If the people of Hunza have remained more or less a pure people for nigh on 1,000 years and the population today is only 25,000, there must have been fairly close intermarriages. Perhaps that would, as I mentioned, account for the similarity of features.

I want to stress, at this point, that I came to Hunza primarily to learn and study (1) about their health and longevity and (2) about their means and methods of agriculture.

Let's examine or re-examine a few of the more pertinent details of their unusual country.

Hunza is a country that lies along the Hunza River

000
582
143
[101]•

[585]

161
582
143

121

000

CHAPTER 49

Hunza vs. Nagir

184 AFTER I'VE had some time to think over the experiences of my visit to Hunza, I've been asked by others and I've also asked myself, "Is there any reason for the evident superiority of the Hunzans over the neighboring peoples?"

So I took the case of the people of Nagir, for example, and made comparisons with them. I'm not even sure whether that is a fair or proper means of comparison.

[101] It seems somewhat strange to me that while the virtues of the people of Hunza were being extolled, the bad features or unredeeming qualities of the people of Nagir were being brought to the fore. So I took pains to search and investigate and I came up with the fact that the people of Hunza and Nagir are of identical stock and that it was people originally from Hunza who populated Nagir.

Hunza

Nagir

Therefore, it is my belief, one of the reasons for the Hunzan high standing throughout the world is due to the excellent quality of leadership that they have enjoyed for many years, and is being continued by the present Mir and his staff and family. 643

I don't want anyone to run off with the idea that everything I saw about the Hunzans impressed me or that I thought they were exceptional in every way, because that definitely is not true. I did then and I do today admire the people of Hunza for all the splendid qualities that make them outstanding people. Anyone who could live in the harsh, tough, back-breaking terrain of Hunza must be made of stern fiber. Yet they have their foibles and weaknesses as well. 123
114

You see there are no immigration rules or laws to stop them from going anywhere in that area . . . at least, there weren't until recently. They could have gone to China, India, Afghanistan, Russia, Pakistan or anywhere else where the pickings might have been easier. But their love of freedom and intelligence that told them they were better off than most people in the world, even though financially poorer, kept them on the mountain slopes that are the banks of the Hunza. 486

No book on Hunza would be complete to even a small degree, unless some mention was made of the fact that it was not always known as Hunza. In fact, back before the turn of the twentieth century, Hunza was known as Kanjut and the people as the Kanjuts. 101

From records that I have located, I learned that, when the rulers of Shignam came to Hunza, they called the valley Kanjut. That name remained until the time of the Girkis and they called the country Hunza, because all of the people were united like the arrows in a quiver. In the Burushaski language Hunza means "arrow."

[P39-C]

123 pull them out with my fingers. Bohar
164 gasped. then relaxed as the extrac-
tion permitted the abscesses at the
roots to drain more freely."

101 This was in Hunza, the small, moun-
131 tainous, Central Asiatic kingdom
121 bordering on China, Kashmir, and
Afghanistan, about which there has
been recurring publicity, characteriz-
ing the land as a Shangri-La peopled
by men and women of extraordinary
121 health and longevity. Since the begin-
ning of man's role as a traveler, tales
of far-off earthly paradises have been
brought home to entertain the un-
traveled. No matter how many such El
Dorados perish under examination,
the next is inevitably welcomed into
the lists with unblemished credulity.

[text continues on p. 40-B]

DARDISTÂN—continued.

	Government.	Prevailing Races or Castes.	Religion.	Condition as regards Slavery.
HUNZA ..	{ Ruled by Raja Ghasan Khān, son of Ghasanfar. (Raja's family, Ayechia.)	Yashkun	All Molai.	{ Here slaves are both kept and dealt in.
ISHKOMAN, or CHATARKUN	Belongs to Yāsin	Yashkun	Molai.	
YĀSIN ..	{ Ruled by Raja Mir Wali, son of Gaur Rahmān. (Raja's family, Bakhte.)	Yashkun	{ Molai and Suni, the former predominating; no Shia.	
CHITRAL and MASTŪJ.	{ Ruled by Raja Imān-ul-Mulk. (Raja's family, Katori.)	Yashkun	Suni.	
GOJĀL in BADAKHSHĀN	{ Dependent on the Mir or Prince of Badakhshān (tributary to Kābul).	Wakhik*	Molai.	
DĀREL ..	Republic	Shin and Yashkun	Suni.	{ In these, captives of war are kept as slaves; slave-dealing is not practised.
TANGIR ..	Republic	Shin and Yashkun	Suni.	
GOR ..	Republic	Shin and Yashkun	Suni.	
THALICHA ..	Republic	Shin and Yashkun	Suni.	
CHILĀS ..	Republic	Shin and Yashkun	Suni.	
KOLĪ ..	Republic	Shin and Yashkun	Suni.	
PĀLUB ..	Republic	Shin and Yashkun	Suni.	

D
631
642
563
564
567
795
B
642
567
567
795

The first five divisions I have already treated of as fully as I was able. We now come to the countries that surround Gilgit.

Nagar lies along the left bank of the Hunza-Nagar River, having Hunza opposite on the right bank. Since about 1867 it has paid a small tribute to the Maharaja, receiving in return a present of larger value; this cannot be considered more than a compliment, and a mark of desire for friendly relations.

The people of Nagar are called Khajani.

Hunza is a more warlike country than Nagar. As shown in the last chapter, it has often been actively at enmity with the Maharaja, and it has generally been in a state of unfriendliness to him. In 1870 the Hunza Raja sent an agent to Sirinagar to open friendly relations, who was well received; I do not know

B
101
131
648

B
648

* I have never met any of these people, but I believe them to be Dārda. Goije is another name by which they are called; that is the territorial name, while Wakhik is the caste name.

458

DĀRDISTĀN.

[CHAP. XX.

what since has occurred, but there seemed to me to be no likelihood of close friendship.

The people of Hunza are called Hunzije.

The people of *Ishkoman*, or *Chatarkun*, are called *Ishkomanije*, or *Chatarkune*.

As to *Yāsin*, the most that we know of it has been told by Mr. Hayward *; I can add little to that. The people of *Yāsin* are called *Pure*.

Here are some notes, taken from hearsay, of the roads that lead out of *Yāsin*:

Yāsin to Mastūj; Three Roads.

(1) By Shaver, five or six marches; it can be traversed by men all the year round; for horses it is difficult in winter, but is not altogether closed for them, or if it is, then only for fifteen days or so at a time, until the snow has hardened; also it is bad for horses for a fortnight in spring.

(2) By *Tūl*, three marches; the Pass crossed the second day.

(3) By *Nazba*, three marches; the Pass crossed the second day. Both these are closed for traffic by the end of October.

Probably the marches are of 20 miles each.

Yāsin by Shaver and Tangir to Swāt;

A five days' journey they say; but I think these are long marches: it may be 120 miles.

Yāsin to Badakhshān.

This road is the one which Mr. Hayward was taking when he met with his death.

The Pass closes for horses at the end of October, while for two months it remains closed for all traffic. There is a glacier on the north side, but horses can go over it, avoiding the crevasses.

The people of *Chitrāl* are called *Katare*.

Dārel. This has seven fort-villages in a valley about a mile and a half wide; the cultivation, I was told, is continuous along

142 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GILGIT AGENCY [CH. IV.

241 The cultivation in Hunza is very limited; the
 311 finest stretch is just below the fort of the chief, and
 extends for some six and a half miles in length with
 a width of from a mile to a mile and a half, the whole
 [361] of the land being irrigated. This main stretch of
 arable land, which is studded with villages, lies at an
 altitude of eight thousand feet, and faces south, and
 the climate here is delightful. Further up the valley
 lie scattered patches of cultivation, getting poorer
 and poorer as the altitude increases. The mountains
 enclosing the valley are very precipitous even for the
 Hindu-Kush; wood and grazing for cattle are there-
 fore unusually scarce, and the people suffer in conse-
 291 quence. The clothing of the people is practically the
 same both in Hunza and Nagar as it is in Chitral, and
 has been described before, the only difference being that
 the men's stockings are not knitted in such elaborate
 patterns, and that, as a general rule, the woollen outer
 robe is, in Hunza especially, more often white than
 brown. All, except on State occasions when the
 higher ranks don the turban, wear the Dard head-
 dress. This is a long bag of brown woollen cloth
 rolled back on itself till it forms a cap, which is one
 fold thick on the top, with a border an inch or so
 thick round the head. It makes a light, warm, and
 delightfully comfortable head-dress, but is a very
 poor protection against severe sun.

- 101. Nagar, as most of the surrounding people and the
 inhabitants themselves generally call it, though they
 also pronounce the word Nagér, and the scientific, for
 some cause best known to themselves, insist on spell-
 [161] ing it *Nagyr*, is a smaller State than Hunza. The
 795 population is about the same, and is composed of
 Yeshkuns, professing themselves Shiahhs, but very
 1/2 [cf. pp. 58, 75, 102, category 116 - Analysis] 2/2 [ca. 10,000 - Analysis]

Gilgit—Hunsa—Nager—Ponyal.

27

In Wakhan, Sirikol, and Yarkund, the name of Kunjoot is given to Hunza, though this name is not in use among the inhabitants themselves, nor among any of the people dwelling south of the Hindoo Koosh. The name, according to the pronunciation of the inhabitants themselves, is more properly Hunzoo. In ancient times it was called Challaj Bultum, a name which has now fallen into disuse.

The ruling family of Hunza is called Ayeshé (heavenly), from the following circumstance. The two states of Hunza and Nager were formerly one, ruled by a branch of the Shahreis, the ruling family of Gilgit, whose seat of government was Nager. Tradition relates that Mayroo Khan, apparently the first Mahommedan Thum of Nager some 200 years after the introduction of the religion of Islam to Gilgit, married a daughter of Trakhan of Gilgit, who bore him twin sons named Moghlot and Girkis. From the former the present ruling family of Nager is descended. The twins are said to have shown hostility to one another from their birth. Their father, seeing this and unable to settle the question of succession, divided his state between them, giving to Girkis the north, and to Moghlot the south, bank of the river.

Age did not diminish their enmity, and Girkis, while out hunting, was one day killed by an adherent of Moghlot, a native of Haramosh, named Mogul Beg, who under pretence of a quarrel with Moghlot took service with Girkis, and persuading him to look up at some game on the cliff above him, drove an arrow into his throat. Girkis left only a daughter, who, according to the custom of the country, became Queen or Ganish of Hunza. Her first care was to avenge her father's death. The tradition relates that having sworn to tear the murderer's liver with her teeth, she carried out her vow to the letter. Left without a chaperon, she was not long without getting into a scrape, as young ladies in similar circumstances are apt to do. The young prince Kamal Khan of Nager, a younger son of Moghlot, crossed the river by night, serenaded her, and won her heart. Night after night the lovers met, unknown to the rest of the world, till serious consequences ensued; and one fine day it was announced in Hunza that, though Providence had not yet provided the princess with a husband, it had seen fit to bless her with a son. Morals in Hunza are not of the strictest even now, so that few questions were asked, and the good people generally contented themselves with beating their drums, dancing, and the usual festivities proper on the occasion of the birth of the prince Chiliss Khan. Kamal Khan seems to have

101

173